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ROTC cadets get ready Students express concerns about future in light of terrorism

**By Tim Krohn
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MANKATO - For students in ROTC this is a time of ramped-up pride and worried moms.

"Every time something new [on the terrorist response] comes up on the news, the moms are calling wondering how we're doing," said Jesse Chapin, a student at Minnesota State University who hopes he will be assigned to the Army Infantry when he graduates this spring.

"You know moms," he adds.

On a crisp afternoon this week, Chapin and about two dozen other ROTC students were going through exercises at a training course near the MSU campus, practicing setting up and crossing a one-rope bridge - a bridge that would be used to cross rivers or ravines in the field.

The cadets in the MSU program are from MSU as well as from Gustavus Adolphus College and Bethany Lutheran College. Students who commit to ROTC pledge to give eight years to the Army. Upon graduation they will be commissioned as second lieutenants.

Senior Nathan Heller, who is the top-ranking cadet, said the Sept. 11 terrorism attacks on America have sharpened their commitment to military service.

"Everyone's more aware of what it means to be in the military, what they signed up for and why. It raises the seriousness and responsibility of being a cadet," Heller said.

Jennifer Thingvold, a junior from Rockford attending Gustavus, said other students notice ROTC cadets more and have questions about the military and what they do. She said her parents are concerned about her future.

"I think it worries anybody in the military. No one wants war, but it's our duty and I will do it. You just take it in stride," said Thingvold, who hopes to get into military intelligence when she graduates. That, coupled with her major in criminal justice, would serve her in her eventual civilian goal of becoming a criminal profiler.

Senior Sara Livingston, like the other cadets, is anxious to get on with her career. "In a year, I'll be out there helping defend our country. It makes me glad I joined," said the Watertown, S.D., native. She hopes to get into the military police and is confident her ROTC training has prepared her for what's ahead. "The confidence and self-assurance I learned are fantastic."

Seniors put in requests for which branch of the Army they would like to enter but won't learn their assignments until this spring. The cadets will then go to military schools around the country and most will eventually lead other soldiers.

Heller, a Mankato resident who's hoping for assignment in the infantry, has a special insight into the ongoing war on terrorism. He spent two years after high school as a missionary in the Middle East, mostly in Turkey.

"I understand the Islamic views. It's really been a conflict for Muslims because they've had to make these choices about the different factions in Islam."

Heller, who was married just two months ago, hopes eventually to get an assignment at an

embassy. He's uncertain if he will stay in the military beyond his commitment. "I'm from a non-military family, so I guess I'll have to see how military life treats me."

While seniors are awaiting their final months in college, younger cadets are anxious. "I wish I was further along," said Pat Tatro, a Gustavus sophomore from Madelia.

Chapin, a senior from Long Prairie, agrees. "What's happened focuses on what the military really does and why it's needed. It renews your sense of why you volunteered. I wish I could go today and get with the guys in the field. I feel prepared."